

METHODOLOGY AND TRENDS IN ECONOMIC HISTORY (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ANCIENT ANDHRA)

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Abstract: The principal thrust in the social and Economic historiography of Early India would be towards the study of its agrarian milieu. The non-agrarian sector of the Economy is therefore often viewed as secondary to the mainstream agrarian Economy. This does not however imply that the non-agrarian sector of Early Indian economy has been marginally treated in the Economic historiography. Crafts, trade and urban centres- the principal facets of the non-agrarian sector of the Economy.

Keywords: Economic History, Ancient Andhra, Buddhist centres, Foreign trade.

Introduction: Historical researches for reconstructing the by-gone times are not simply interesting but enlightening and hence studying history is a sacred purpose. Historical studies served in the past as source of nationalistic inspiration, filled the minds of Indians with a sense of pride for the glorious achievements of their fore-fathers in every sphere of civilization and culture, and generated an ardent love for independence when the country was under foreign rule, and prompted them to struggle for political independence and to institute self-rule. Naturally, such a lofty aim directed the historical researches to become boastful accounts by some scholars, without much regard for scientific norms that should guide the studies so as to be objective and impartial. Such studies devoted to raise to greater heights, the spiritual character of Indian culture on one hand and the achievements of some kings and emperors as conquerors and builders of political structures over vast territories, or patrons of letters and arts. They often tend to overlook the material background to the rise of such imperial structures or to their decline and fall in course of time, mostly under the notion that the things earthly are impermanent and those that transcend the limits of time and space are permanent and long lasting.

Objectives:

1. to find out the different views of scholars
2. to find out geography of A.P
3. to find out the religious influence on economy.

Geographical Background: Natural gifts of rivers and a lengthy sea coast of 960 kms. may be added favourable rainfall and other climatic features which make the land rich in agricultural production establishing trade contacts with other parts of the country since early times advantages of Andhra Country (P.V. Parabrahma Sastry 1996) Physiographically, Andhra Pradesh can be broadly divided into three zones, namely, 1) Coastal-plains 2) Eastern-ghats and 3) Western Peneplains. The coastal plain marks the littoral part extending from the Bay of Bengal to the Eastern Ghats varying from 75 to 150 k.m. in width. The districts of Nellore,

Prakasam, Guntur, Krishna, West Godavari, East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam fall in the coastal belt. Especially in the Coastal districts, Guntur, Krishna and the two Godavari districts constitute the broad central plain of alluvium silted by the rivers of Krishna and Godavari. South to the coastal districts, the plain tapers off into a narrow strip of unfertile sandy plateau, constituting the coastal parts of Prakasam and Nellore districts. Here the river Pennar forms an alluvial delta in Nellore Taluk. The Telangana zone, situated on the North-Western region of the state, occupying a part of the peneplained plateau, is comprises of ten districts, viz., Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Medak, Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Warangal, Khammam, Nalgonda and Mahaboob Nagar. The Rayalaseema zone on the South-Western region of the state is consists of Anantapur, Kurnool, Cuddapah and Chittoor districts. (S.J. Mangalam. 1986).

The Eastern-Ghats are a series of disjuncted hills forming as much a crescentic border of the coastal plain as a convex fortification of the peneplained plateau in the Deccan. The rivers Godavari and Krishna breach this rampart at before entering the coastal belt. The important ranges which constitute the Eastern Ghats are the Nallamalai, Velikonda, Erramalai, Seshachalam, Palakonda and Nagari which have a number of valleys and river basins. The elevation of the Ghats gradually increases towards the north of Godavari and reach upto 1500 M. above M.S.L. A peak at Sankaram in Visakhapatnam district has the height of 1616M above MSL. The peneplained interior zone comprises the entire Telangana and Rayalaseema regions, highly eroded and isolated hillocks break the vast plains. The elevation of the Telangana region varies from 530 M to 660 M and that of Rayalaseema which slopes down from the Mysore Plateau, from 300M to 465M above MSL. The Telangana region is drained off by the river Godavari and its tributaries such as the Manjira, Pranahita, Indravathi, and Sabari. The river systems of the Krishan-Tungabhadra and Pennar flow down to the

Bay of Bengal through the Rayalaseema Region. The Languliya (ancient langulini) rises in the hills of Kalahandi and flows south through the district of Ganjam to empty itself into the Bay of Bengal below Srikakulam.

The Eastern Ghats, it falls into the Bay of Bengal. In its course, the river receives a number of affluent. Near about Athni it is joined by the combined waters of several streams of which the Koina, Varna and Vena or Yenna are well known. The combined stream of the Krishna and Vena is often mentioned as Krishna-Vena or Krishnaveni. Before entering the former state of Hyderabad it receives the Malaprabha on its right bank below Muddebihal. On reaching Hyderabad, the river drops from the table land through which forces its way down to the celebrated doabs of Sholapur and Raichur. The first of this is formed by its junction with the Bhima, which figures prominently as a Sahya river in the Puranas. The Raichur Doab is formed by the confluence of the Krishna with the Tungabhadra, which is formed by the union of the twin streams, the Tunga and Bhadra both of which have their origin in the Western Ghats. These two streams after meeting each other near Harihar flow in the north-eastern direction under the name Tunga-Bhadra and join the Krishna north of Nandikotkur in the district of Kurnool. Among other important tributaries of the Krishna mention may be made of the Dindi, Peddavagu, Musi-Aler, Paler and Muner. Thus, swollen by many affluents the Krishna runs past a number of important cities and flows through the classic land between the cities of Dhanyakataka- Amaravati and Vijayawada to enter the sea forming a wide Delta.

In the coastal belt the Krishna-Godavari alluvial expanse is occasionally marked by rich Mangogroves, swamps and clusters of tall palm trees, big and small lagoons and low sand dunes near the sea. This alluvial expanse constitutes the agricultural nucleus of the region (Spate O.H.K. 1967). Further up the coast, in the Srikakulam-Visakhapatnam region, there is an occurrence of outcrop of rocks which come close to the sea. The valley floors of this region constitutes of black soil, grade upwards into poorer red soil (Ibid, p. 734). In the extreme south, along the coast that is, in the Nellore region a narrow belt of alluvium intervenes between the rugged interior and the sea. But Nellore generally speaking, is poor land. (Ibid p.738)

The Anantapur - Chittoor basins between the bold scarp of the Palkonda Range and the higher Mysore levels are isolated and poor, except in the extreme southeast the Nagari Valleys, culturally nearer to Tamilnadu. Below the lateritic apron is a better watered and more fertile piedmont slip, which provides solid belt of paddy and hence major settlements. The Cuddapahs from a crescent-shaped

belt traversed by the Krishna and the Tungabhadra in the north and the Pennar in the South, all flowing through such ranges as the Erramalais / Seshachalam, Palkonda and Nallamalai. The valley floor though relatively poor, provides some cultivation aided by tank irrigation. North of the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley the Plateau region of Hyderabad - Telangana is rocky and poor, agriculture being largely dependent on whatever hand-made irrigation can achieve.

The very structure of this natural division seems to have determined the highways of this region. Any physical map of this region would show that there is a large opening along the Krishna Valley, which is still the main line of communication between Maharashtra and the eastern coast through Vidarbha and Hyderabad- Telangana. Here, all along the east the broken chain of the Mahendra - Parvata (hills) separates the coastal strip from the Andhra Plateau. The breaks in the Ghats provide natural routes which connect the two regions, namely the coastal region and the plateau region. Another important pass in the Nallamalai range at Giddaluru links Andhra with Karnataka. Still a third pass through which runs the Madras - Guntakhal railway line, seems to connect the region with Tamilnadu. Indeed, these natural passes seem to have provided the clue to the building of the highways of the region in the protohistoric and historic periods. Besides these natural routes later developed into highways, we have evidence of two other routes which at one time connected Andhra with South Kosala or Mahakosala on the one hand and Kalinga on the other, the first testified by the well-known Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta and the Itinerary of Hiuen Tsang, for Instance (Sircar D.C. 1961, 209-10) and the second, by the existence of early Buddhist sites like that of Salihundam in the Srikakulam district of A.P. (Subramanyam. R. 1964, Hyd).

Long ago Jouveau- Dubreuil analysed and showed very convincingly that all important Buddhist establishments in the Andhra region were situated on the highways referred to in the foregoing paragraphs. (Subrahmanyam K.R. 1932). It is significant that all these highways pass through the city of Vengipuram, one of the older Capitals of Andhradesa. It is equally meaningful that this Vengipuram was situated at the very heart of the valley of the Krishna and the Godavari, two rivers which seem to have played an important role in the history of the evolution of civilization in the entire region. Indian Census Reports from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards make it clear that of all the physiographical regions of what is now known as the Andhra Pradesh, the Krishna-Godavari valley had highest density of population ("Census. 1961). The agricultural fertility of the soil being the most important determinant in this regard. One can

imagine that the situation was not very much different in early historical times. Indeed, this valley was the solid agricultural nucleus around which all other parts of the Andhra region clustered themselves, evidently through a process of crystallization. This process seems to have started even in protohistoric times when agricultural technology was limited presumably to hoe cultivation alone. A few words may be said here with regard to the influence of the ocean upon the life of the Andhra people. The close association with the sea made the inhabitants of the coastal regions fearless and adventurous sailors. The idea of conquering the sea always haunted them and the result was the discovery of a number of places hitherto unknown to them. Going there both as colonists and traders they also widened the geographical horizon of Indian civilization. Levi (1929) has pointed out that the sea-routes to the East from the ports of Andhra had come into common use many centuries before the Christian era. Trade relations with the west also opened well before the said era. This maritime trade was regulated by the wind currents, better known as the monsoonal wind currents, which are especially important and were perhaps unique in their effects. (Vincent Smith 1807) The monsoon, whose regular action was known to the Indian sailors from very early times, was discovered for the west sometime about the middle of the 1st Century AD and since then it had dominated the navigation of the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal till the invention of Steamships in the 19th century.

Aim Of The Study At Marco Level: History is considered as essentially a record of events in the worldly life of humankind, the aspirations and activities for material welfare with which progress of civilization and culture was concomitant. The Marxist school of historical study has come prominently in the later half of the twentieth century, that is to say in the post-independent India, as historians consciously felt the need of presenting the past through the view-point of production and distribution of wealth, the economic aspect of civilization, and its shaping the social and religious aspects of cultural progress. But, the historical logic of the school is marked by the tendency to depict man in the past, not more than a machine producing wealth and exploiting others in his single-minded consciousness of selfish motives and programmes. Objectivity and balanced understanding of the past remained, as much the expected qualities of scientific research, as they were in the past, notwithstanding the school professing to have been scientific in their method. Historical research thus proves to be continuously running after truth, approaching evidence again and again, besides hunting for fresh evidence and sources of information, in order to

unfold a good number of mysteries on the path of sojourn for truth. Even though the fact, bearing the truth in its womb, is stated as sacred, the freedom that has been allowed in interpreting it leads to personalization of the deductions out of analysis of evidence, rather deeply coloured and stereo-typed, in accordance with their set-ideology of political thought.

As it has been explained above that historical researches in the past were mainly devoted to political events, to the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires in chronological sequence, to study the genealogies and course of succession of rulers, considering some of them as heroes and some others as weak kings and unworthy pleasure-seekers, the study has not been a source of enlightenment. Hence, the historical studies have to be present the past of the country in such a way that it conveys some meaning and purpose, by application of scientific methods—in evaluating the evidence, in drawing conclusions, and presenting them in continuity and consistency. But, it is quite unnatural to expect evidence, tangible and palpable, for every event and turn of events, in which case there would hardly be any need for research - everything comes on hand in concrete form and history in such a case would surely be devoid of life and dynamism. Human life on earth is always dynamic and vivacious, passing through unexpected and challenging situations as well as drawing support from unforeseen and inexplicable forces. Hence, the scientific methods of analyzing the evidence should as well be accompanied by a constructive imagination, logical in tune with human nature and limitations of the human effort, purely from the materialistic point of view, only with the help of available evidence, but should be able to see before and after it. As such, the so-called scientific tools of enquiry and investigation are not helping historians to present the past in its true colours and contours, so as to provide the right understanding of the present, the required knowledge about problems that the societies and nations are now confronting, though the human aspirations and exertions remaining the same, ever since the emergence of humankind on earth. They are economic progress, material welfare and at the same time peaceful living in societies, the societies having transformed into nations by the modern time.

Such logical constructions in historical research, would naturally take the form of a model, or a view-point, through which historian looks the past and understands as well as interpret the evidence in a schematic way. In the absence of such logical construction, history has little difference from traditional accounts, the mythological narrations, and popular hearsay. On the other hand, a logically constructed view-point makes the study convincing

to rational minds, in which man appears as maker of himself, in terms of his civilization and culture. Such studies have to be independent of the play of divine forces in shaping the course of events, of course, under the inevitable forces of nature over which he has little control.

Aim of the Present Study at Micro Level: Keeping the above mentioned historiographical objective in mind, the history of Andhradesa in the centuries before and after Christ is taken up for the present study, the Indo-Roman trade from this part of the country as the thrust-area. Great amount of archaeological material has been coming out for several decades in the past, as the result of explorations and excavations all over India and outside, supplementing the Classical Writings and Greeks, of the same time, which were the main source of information till recent. The archaeological discoveries especially in the regions around Persian Gulf and Red Sea, around Indian Ocean, in as much as Indian subcontinent seems to project the countries around Indian ocean to have formed into a vast network of maritime trade, with several regional hubs and some of them to have been located on the coastal plains of Peninsular India, especially in coastal Andhradesa. Bopparachchi (1996) opined that the region around Persian Gulf, which was viewed till recent time as marginally important in a wider commercial net-work of Egypt-Arabia-India, in the early centuries of Christian era has proved itself an area of trade, important in its own right, at least from the beginning third millennium B.C. (Sea-faring in the Indian Ocean: Archaeological Evidence from Sri Lanka in Tradition and Archaeology, in Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean, Ed. H.P. Ray and J.F. Salles, Delhi 1996). I.C. Glover (1990) opined that commercial impulses from the Roman Empire and India led to the formation of a 'vast network of trade, stretching from Western Europe, via the Mediterranean basin and the Red Sea to the South China. Naturally, Andhradesa as one of the regional hubs of the vast net-work of international commerce must have experienced a great amount of material prosperity, herself having accomplished production of merchandise so as to actively participate in it. As such, the Roman connection is increasingly seen as a powerful factor in the urbanization of ports of Peninsular India in the early historic period (S.J. Keay, 1996-97). In spite of the subject having been studied by so many eminent scholars and distinguished archaeologists, whose works will be briefly reviewed in the following section as to have set the model for the present study, the subject promises opportunities for studies afresh.

It needs no emphasis to say that India is land of many peoples and cultures, more or less formed into some distinct regions, which are characterized by

languages and patterns of civilization. These regional languages and cultures inspire people even before the wider sentiment of Indian nationalism, and thus regional histories acquire equal importance, if not more, as the history of India. Apart from this natural tendency, it is easier and convenient to study the history of India, in terms of regions and correlating regional histories by supplementing with each other, to make the history of India on wider scale. Geographically, rather from the physiographical point of view, Indian subcontinent consists of fertile plains in river valleys, where peoples in societies took up permanent habitations since pre-historic times and eventually progressed in culture and civilization. But the fertile plains are scattered over the country, separated by far wider areas under dense forests, mountainous and rugged and unfertile lands. The plains were the grounds on which the moral and material civilization evolved and flowered, where wealthy towns and cities rose up and kings, who were enterprising and zealous of conquests, led their armies in their programme of political expansionism and aggrandizement. In other words, they were the regions of historical importance, inspiring the people with their glories in the past.

Andhra Pradesh is one such state in the Indian Union, with its own individuality in matters of language, civilization and culture, worthy of historical study with useful purpose, and hence the study has been taken up, keeping in mind the need for a balanced study in accordance with the principles of historiography, explained above. However, the fact that no part of the country is so much individual as to flourish absolutely independent of others, and no region could remain aloof from others to the extent of without influencing, or getting influenced by others, is never to be ignored. Hence, the present study is not strictly limited to the region of Andhra Pradesh as a water-tight compartment and adequate importance has been accorded to corresponding developments in the regions around, of the same time, and developments in other regions to have come over here and blossomed, without which the study remains not only incomplete but also unintelligible.

Review Of Past Works And The Scope Of The Study: The subject taken up for the present study is the economic history from the point of view of economy, India, which had touched the Ganga-Jamuna plains in the north and the plains of the river Kaveri in the south, at times of its zenith. The period was marked by great literary activity and the magnificent excavation of Buddhist rock-cut chaityas and viharas in Western Ghats and Sahyadri ranges, testifying the material prosperity of the country and life of the people. These are matters of pride to the people of Andhra Pradesh, making their history quite

interesting and inspiring, but interest and inspiration are not the motivating factors for studying history, as it has been amply explained above, as education and enlightenment are the objectives of historical studies. The political achievements of the Satavahana kings and their supposed patronage to arts and letters are quite well-known to students of ancient history of India, and that of Andhradesa, but the factors that contributed to the material prosperity have not properly been assessed.

About which copious literature is available in the form of writings of Classical Greek writers, the *Geography* of Ptolemy, the *Indica* by Arrian, the *Natural History* of Pliny, etc. Scholars and historians have been studying these works from about the beginning of the twentieth century at least and reconstructed the economic conditions of the country during the time. However, a number of historians in the country utilized the information from these Classical writings mostly to substantiate their readings and conclusions about the genealogy and chronology of the Satavahana rulers, than evaluating and appreciating the commercial relations of the country with the outside world and its impact on the civilization and culture. It was because, political history and especially construction of genealogies and chronologies of the ruling families constituted the central subject of study of history, till about the first half of the twentieth century. The evidence on foreign trade came to be added in the course of archaeological excavations from about the middle of the twentieth century, resulted in the recovery of inscriptions, coins, pottery and several other artifacts, etc. This vast body of information prompts historians to study, with the view of assessing and estimating the volume of trade and its impact on society and culture of the country. In fact, archaeologists from about the middle of twentieth century began to think increasingly on the settlement patterns of early food-producing communities and the process of urbanization. It was in other words, linking the Proto-historic cultures with the Early historic, by tracing the gradual progress of the pre-historic societies into Proto-historic. The geographical background to the economic enterprise of the Pre and Proto-historic societies, in the form of river-systems, climate, land-systems etc. have been presented, in such a way as it would provide glimpses into the causal factors for its beginning and progress ultimately leading profitable foreign trade.

Y. D. Sharma may be mentioned as pioneer in the studies, his "Exploration of Historical Sites in Ancient India", appeared in 1953 was perhaps the earliest work in studying the process of urbanization, followed by several other eminent archaeologists, Indian as well as foreign. The progress of early settlements could grow into urban centres by the early historic times, of

circa B.C. 300, certainly because of proliferation of arts and crafts, increase in commodity production and, carrying on trade with distant lands, initially over-land within the country and gradually with outside world overseas. This process of urban development from Pre-historic sites, perhaps going back to Neolithic times was ably presented, with reference to the prevalence of Mother-Goddess cult, by D.D. Kosambi, in his articles, "At the Crossroads: A Study of Mother-Goddess Cult Sites" and "Pilgrims Progress, a Contribution to the Pre-history of the Western Deccan Plateau" in his compendium, *Myth and Reality* (Bombay: 1962). His work was based on extensive field work in the hills and valleys in Western Ghats, where the pre-historic sites were located close to the Buddhist rock-cut *viharas* and *chaityas*, a model by itself. It is a matter of regret that not much work of the type was taken up with reference to Andhra Pradesh, where most of the Megalithic burial monuments as well as the preceding Microlithic sites had virtually vanished, before archaeologists could lay their hands on them. The country being highly fertile, the peasants in recent generations totally removed the monuments and disturbed the sites out of their ambition of bringing the entire land under cultivation. Nevertheless, his analysis and conclusions have been taken up, with reference to Andhradesa and effort has been made to utilize available evidence in locating urban centres as well as tracing trade routes that connected them each other, and those that connected them with the port-towns.

An important contribution to the beginnings of social life in pre-historic times, because of the development of production and distribution of wealth, of course, in the form of grain and cattle, was made by Sahlins M. His article "On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange," (in *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology*, Ed. Bonton, M, London, 1965), and in his independent work, "Tribesmen" (London: 1998), dealt with various types of exchange systems, envisaged by the substantivists in evolutionary frame-work, such as reciprocity linked to seminary societies and redistribution to chiefdoms and states. He substantiated that social and economic advancement that marked the early historic times manifested on the foundations set them, as early as the Neolithic times and in the proto-historic Megalithic cultures that overlapped them. B.D. Chattopadhyaya (*Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval India*, 1974 and "Urban Centres in Early Medieval India, An Over View", 1986 and, *Transition to the Early Historical Phase in the Deccan*, 1987) made admirable contribution to the study and came more or less the same understanding that foreign trade and urbanization manifested on the proto-historic bases of agrarian economy. The conclusion had been

substantiated against the archaeological background, with reference to early Andhradesa, in the excavations at several places, such as Amaravati, Kesanapalli, Nagarjunakonda and Yelesvaram in the past and recently at Peda Bankur, China Bankur, Dhulikatta, Satanikota and others, where the phenomenon had been observed. These sites belong to the Satavahana times, where North Indian influence of urbanization in the form of pottery, coinage, script etc. has been clearly brought to light. The Economic History of Deccan, by Das, D.R., (Delhi: 1969), Trade and Commerce of Ancient India, by H. Chakraborty (Calcutta: 1966) and another of the same name by Srivastava, B. (Varanasi: 1968) enshrined in themselves much valuable data from the earlier studies on the basis of literature as well as the archaeological discoveries. Proto and Early Historical Cultures of Andhradesa (1983) of V.V. Krishna Sastry and Life and Art of Early Andhradesa (1983) of Amita Ray and Archaeology of the Satavahana and Kshatrapa Times by Margabandhu (New Delhi: 1985) are very important contributions to the study. In another subsequent article, Beginning of Urbanization in Early Andhradesa, (1978), Amita Ray had surveyed and analyzed the archaeological data related to the growth of urban centres in Deccan, particularly in the Andhra and Karnataka regions and pointed out that agrarian base of the regions supported Indo-Roman trade, in which Buddhism was as well a contributing factor.

Kosambi was one of the pioneering historians of the Marxist school of Indian historiography, which came to influence historical studies, in subsequent decades and thus a good number of scholars took up the studies in the pattern of rise and decay of urban centres. His work, "The Culture and Civilization of ancient India in Historical Outline" (1981) enshrined his study and conclusions, and served a model to many a historian of the school. The Marxist school of historical study accorded central place to man, as maker of material civilization and culture, instead of kingdoms and empires, and their glories and decay, emphasized on the social and economic profiles of the civilization and culture, and the forces that shaped them and brought about eventual changes, for which the historians of the school have to be thanked. But, the conclusions they have drawn on many aspects of civilization and culture, by approaching the evidence purely in literary sense, unmindful of spirit, appears more or less similar to those of the British colonial historians, but in a different garb. The present studies are planned in accordance with the changed orientation of historical studies, no doubt, under the influence of the Marxist school, according primary importance to material culture, but the conclusions drawn are not entirely from the Marxist point of view, at each and every

step. Utilization of the archaeological evidence to supplement the literary evidence is the primary feature of the method of study adopted in order to properly highlight the foreign trade that Andhradesa carried on with Roman Empire, as the contributory factor for social and political developments during the period under study.

Aristotle remarked that man is social animal, but he would have been more apt if he said that man is an economic animal; the economic aspirations and activities of man were at the root of his social and religious orders and their function, and finally to the foundation of kingdoms and empires, about which history deals with in general. The economic activity of man commenced, in fact, as early as he was semi-human, at any rate when he territorially settled in societies, turning into food-producer from the state of food-gatherer, but it belongs to the phase of pre-history and hence not to be dealt with in detail. But it should not altogether be overlooked as the pre-historic phases of progress eventually led into the historical ages in the form of proliferation and expansion of village settlements, and of the janapadas, and the growth of urban centres, with eventual progress of trade and commerce. At the root of all this course of development was, undoubtedly, the natural resources in the physiographical and ecological settling of the territories, where the pre-historic societies settled at the earliest. The economic progress brought about the subsequent progress in terms of social, religious and political aspects of culture, as V.G. Childe (Man Makes Himself, 1955) had rightly observed that to carry out a study on trade, one must recognize that the commercial economy is crucial factor in sustaining the economic as well as political base, and that one cannot ignore or underplay its role in understanding historical change in the early Proto-Historic societies, the world over that resulted in the break-up of kinship patterns. Parasher Sen, in her article "Social Structure and Economy of Settlements in the Central Deccan" (1991) and "Urban Settlements in the Deccan and Satavahana History" (1994) has discussed on the social changes that the economic developments, especially the foreign trade had brought about in early Andhradesa, followed by more detailed studies by Parabrahma Sastry, "Rural Studies in Early Andhra" (1996) and "The Early Historic Transition" (2003). Hence, the geographical background to these developments, the river-systems and the fertile plains they formed, by bringing alluvial soils along their courses, have been sufficiently explained.

As explained above, the plains in river valleys were cradles of pre-historic settlements in small villages, where civilization started at least from the Neolithic time and it flowered into subsequent phases of

Chalcolithic-Megalithic cultures. Over the plains of Indus-Sarasvati river systems, the Chalcolithic phase witnessed great amount of economic progress, characterized by foreign trade and rise of urban centres but such development is not noticed in Deccan, where the Chalcolithic cultures were overlapped by Neolithic on one hand and Megalithic on the other. Archaeological developments in these aspects have been studied and the process of urbanization was defined by Dilip K. Chakravarti in his articles "Concept of Urban Revolution and the Indian Contact", and "Some Theoretical Aspects of Early Indian Urban Growth", in *Puratattva*, Vols. VI (1972) and VII (1974) respectively. These points have been dealt with in the present study, on the lines developed by the great archaeologist; in such a way that it gives an appraisal of the foreign trade in early historical ages in Deccan, especially on the coastal plains of ancient Andhradesa. The situation in the country appears to have been that the clusters of village settlements of Neolithic Culture, eventually well-progressed in civilization and culture as well as producing surplus sufficient to carry on foreign trade, as excavations at several sites had clearly demonstrated. But, such fertile plains, where the urban centres developed, were scattered over wide territory and separated by dense forests and forest-clad mountains. Yet the people traversed in the difficult terrains and made paths for transporting merchandise to some trade-centres that progressed in different parts of the country as well as port-towns on coastline, which were outlets to trade with far off countries, across oceans. Archaeological discoveries of Megalithic sites, accompanied in some cases by the remains of Buddhist establishments help in locating such commercial centres and tracing the routes of transportation and communication, across the dense forests and mountainous terrains over Deccan. "Urbanization in India" (1982) V.K. Thakur and "Cities, Crafts and Commerce under the Kushanas" (1984) by Kameswar Prasad are much useful in studying the growth of urban centres in India in general, which served as guidance in the present study, with reference to Deccan and Andhradesa in ancient times.

Progress of trade and commerce, especially with countries across the sea would not have been possible, if the economy of the country remained only agricultural. It was undoubtedly possible only when crafts and arts developed, some of them to make the tools and implements for expansion of agriculture and to carry on the cultivation on larger scale. Cultivation was certainly not limited to production of food-grains, but also cotton, with which textiles were produced not only for domestic consumption but also to export to other countries. Sufficient production of food was necessary to support the artisan and

craftsmen sections, if not, they would not have been progressed and commodity production would not have been possible. These developments must have brought about divisions in the social settlements, different sections specializing in different arts and crafts, as well as mercantile sections that took up the responsibility of transporting the cargo and marketing the surplus production. Hence, for all the social developments in the form of artisan and craftsmen as well as mercantile sections, it was economic progress at the root and V.G. Childe (*Ibid.*) observed that in the early proto-historic societies, the world over, the economic developments resulted in the break-up of kinship relations that characterized tribal societies. R.M.C. Adams (1966) had similarly observed that trade and urbanization were thus factors of significance in changing the social structure and, fundamentally its organization and the spreading of its networks led to sharp social stratification, reinforcing the wealth and status of elites.

In fact, the early Indian culture paid ample importance to economics, though it is understood as essentially other-worldly and emphasizing on *dharma*, or the enjoined duty of individual, as means of emancipation from the worldly life. Characterizing Indian culture as other-worldly is one of the fallacious beliefs of scholars and historians, since Max Muller passed such a remark. Early Indian thinkers developed economics as a specialized branch of knowledge, called *Vartta*, and Kautilya (1.4, 1-4) laid down that it is one of the essential subjects of study for a prospective king, along with *Trayi* (the three Vedas) and *Anvikshaki* (philosophy, as it provides introvert vision). The term *Vartta* is derived from the term *vritti*, or occupation, and it provides not only with the principles and practice of occupations and professions, simply for livelihood, but also with the duties and obligations of people in a particular profession.

As it has been mentioned above, the economic progress to the stage of carrying on foreign trade brought into being several sociological developments that are often overlooked or misinterpreted, as the historians are accustomed to look through the Aryan and non-Aryan paradigms and that the source material to study them was produced by Brahmans, to suite their selfish advantages of social primacy, by bringing economic inequalities etc. Inscriptions from almost all the Buddhist centres, which were urban centres that were basically the centres of trade and commerce as well, record donations to the institutions, not only by ruling elite but also various craftsman, artisan and mercantile guilds, as well as made individually. Such professional and commercial guilds were mentioned in the inscriptions as *nigama*, *goshthi*, etc., which were

certainly not have been created by Brahmans, but organized by the respective groups, probably on the model of oligarchies, in the same way as the village and tribal administration was going on (often dubbed by historians as 'republics') The same development is referred to in the *dharmasutra* literature (c. B.C. 800 - 300) and more than that class of literature, in the *dharmasastras* (better known as *smriti* literature) such as those of Brhaspati, Narada, Vishnu and others, probably the works of Brahmanical writers. They empower the guild-organizations to frame their own laws and adopt legal procedures, to be executed by their own chief, which was also mentioned by Kautilya in his Arthashastra. The legal literature as well as Arthashastra warn the ruling powers not to interfere in the internal matters of administration and legal procedure of the guilds. It is a matter of regret that historians at large fail to understand that the natural tendency to pass on the positions and professional as well as craft techniques in succession in the respective families, the hereditary nature of membership in the corporate bodies of craftsmen, artisans and commercial sections in the societies, together with the internal autonomy that the bodies could exercise, tended them to become each of them distinctly important. The economic position and prestige that each body could enjoy were the determinant factors, of their relative positions in the social civilization, with which they must have willingly reconciled, as the society as a whole was deemed as an organism with various limbs of it as equal in importance for its proper functioning.

Other for the possession of the coastal plains of Andhradesa, along Bay of Bengal, a meaningful discussion can be taken up on the literary evidences for foreign trade. There is plenty of evidence on the subject in the writings of classical Greek writers, the most important being those of Ptolemy, Pliny, Arrian and the *Periplus* of an anonymous Greek sailor. They speak about the country, its agricultural and mineral wealth, production of articles that were in great demand in the Roman Empire, the trade centres and port-towns through which the merchandise was being marketed and transported across the seas, etc. These details were, of course, studied by some scholars in the past, but not in an integrated way with the history of the territory under present study, and only as specialized accounts of economic conditions, because of which they could not be appreciated properly

As such, the urban centres in ancient India, especially in Andhra Pradesh, were invariably associated with Buddhist establishments, which had yielded a good number of inscriptions that recorded gifts made by *gahaptis*, *setthis*, who were chiefs of various craftsman, artisan and mercantile guilds, ruling chieftains and individual donors, mentioned by their

names. These inscriptions not only point to the flourishing condition of Buddhism during the period, but also it flourished by means of the munificent donations made by wealthy and affluent sections in society, living in urban centres. Further, some scholars in recent times such as Himamsu Prabha Ray are strongly inclined to the view that there was direct relation, rather interdependence between the economic activity in the urban centres and the religious activity of the Buddhist monks in the Viharas that are found in close vicinity to them.

The location of towns and cities as centres of arts, crafts and trade and Buddhist establishments that were frequented by pious devotees, in addition to the traders and merchants from different places, often from far off places as well, the routes that connected them each with the other, as well as with the nearest port-towns, would be naturally an interesting subject. D.D. Kosambi had worked out as a result of his minute analysis of facts - the location of Pre-historic sites, right from the Mesolithic and Microlithic phases, in the Western Ghats in Maharashtra and the Buddhist cave temples in their vicinities - could trace some of the trade routes, obviously that must have been used by invading armies in historical times, and came out with definite conclusions that the paths were in usage right from the pre-historic times. Undoubtedly, it is a model work but could not be taken up with reference to each and every region for obvious reasons, mentioned above. As the Pre-historic sites and the Buddhist monuments of historical times in Maharashtra are in a more or less undisturbed condition, because they are located in the hills and vales but it is not the case with coastal Andhra. However, historians in the past were able to make some logical conjectures about the location of the urban centres as well as the routes that possibly connected them each with the other, by a careful study of topography of the country at present, with the help of Classical writings, such as Periplus and others. Fortunately, a few more Buddhist sites, obviously in the vicinity of ancient urban centres, have come to light in recent archaeological explorations and excavations such as Dhulikatta, Pedda Bankur, Nela Kondapalli and others in Telingana and Vaddamanu, Dhupadu, Chandavaram and others in coastal Andhra. These recent discoveries serve as missing links in tracing the ancient trade routes as well as identifying some of the ancient cities, such as Pithumda, which were known in the past only from literature and their location remained indefinite. The tracing of the routes that Buddhist pilgrims and the caravan traders would probably have used, gives understanding of the interdependence of the regions, the centres of production and centres of trade and commerce, the paths of peoples moving from region to region in

search of opportunities and better living conditions and thereby the interactions of civilizations, cultures and languages, in their process of manifestations.

These views are similar to that mentioned above, in the context of the Buddhist institutions having been related to the urban centres and to have co-operated in the economic activity, as some recent scholars hold.

Not only from the point of view of Indo-Roman trade, which has been traditionally studied and debated by historians, the recent archaeological discoveries have added new dimension to the foreign trade from Peninsular India, especially with South-East Asian countries in a spectacular way. The early linkages with Persian Gulf and Western India and Sri Lanka (Bopearachchi, 1996) on one hand, and Peninsular India and the Swahili coast C.A. Hromith, 1981) on the other have opened new vistas in the studies. J.I. Miller (Spice Trade of Roman Empire, 1969) made an exhaustive study of Classical literature and came to the conclusion that Roman trade contact with India was primarily in spices, and that they were not only as condiments in food, but also in preparation of several ointments as beauty aids, drugs, medicines and also as incense, thus indispensable for the Western world. As such, it led to identification of several plants and trees of herbal value, locating their habitats and obtaining them, in which process a lot of scientific progress, apart from the growth of mercantile activity took place. He had pointed out that the producers of these products were most likely not the traders and carried them to sell in far off places; as the producers were more interested in staying with their farms and cultivating them while a distinct class of traders, sailors across the seas to carry them, to have come into existence. These activities, as they proved to be vitally important as sources of income for producers as well as traders, and thereby to the society at large, must have attracted the political powers, who interfered with production and trading activities to control and collect their dues and taxes. In a way, urbanization in the opinion of Miller was all-round progress of the societies, in matters of their order and function, as well as the *janapadas* and kingdoms, in matters of increased revenues leading to the consolidation of monarchical authority. Wheatley, P., is another distinguished scholar, whose work "Nagara and Commandery" (1983) presented a similar thesis, on the basis of his detailed study on the growth of a number of urban centres in South-East Asia, with the help of archaeological material. He had laid down that social ranking, in other words a hierarchical order of social sections in relation to occupations as well as increasing centralization of power, from the political point of view, are associated results in the process of urbanization, in consequence of progress

of foreign trade. He pointed out that a number of villages on fertile plains of river valleys in South-East Asia registered progress initially in agrarian economy and eventually grew into flourishing urban centres about the beginning of the Christian era. He found net-networks of trading centres developing out of such villages eventually becoming seats of kingdoms with more and more centralization of political power and their rulers indulging in frequent wars for supremacy, obviously with the view of obtaining their shares in the profits of commerce, of the states in their neighbourhood.

J.I. Miller pointed out that in spite of political changes, in the form of rise and fall of kingdoms, invasions of foreigners and other modifying factors, the demand for spices continued, at least as long as the Roman empire was economically sound and Indians used to carry the cargo from the ports on the Konkan coast, in their own ships, across the Indian ocean (more familiarly known as Arabian sea) to the mouth or Red sea. He presented that at the same time, the Arabs also took part in the trade, used to carry the cargo from the ports on Malabar Coast and possibly from the Sri Lankan ports, while the Greeks used to carry directly from India to Egypt. The trade with India was feared to cause economic drain to the Roman Empire and that Pliny warned against it, but these traditional accounts have been dismissed by Bernardi, A., (1970). He had rightly pointed out the trade between the two countries declined by the beginning of the fourth century A.D., As suggested by the paucity of Roman Gold Coins of the time and later, while the empire actually declined only after another one and a half century. Against this background of growth and decline of Indo-Roman trade, several scholars in the past advanced theories on urbanism, of course, with reference to Gangetic valley in the post-Gupta period. Probably, R.S. Sharma is pioneer in this aspect of study and inspired several other historians, as a result of which his conclusions rapidly spread, and directed subsequent studies in a quick pace. His works, "Decay of Gangetic towns in Gupta and Post-Gupta Times (1972) and "Urban Decay in India", projected that feudalism was taking shape as early as the decline of Roman trade hastened its emergence, and that it manifested in its complete form in the Post-Gupta period. In his latter mentioned work, R.S. Sharma had dealt well and tried to explain the same phenomenon, decline of foreign trade hastened the manifestation of feudalism.

Conclusion: Taking up the line of thinking that Kosambi had presented in most of his writings and clearly laid down in his work, "The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline (1981), a number historians linked the rise of urban centres and progress of foreign trade with the

popularity of Buddhism in the early centuries of Christian era. Himamsu Prabha Ray has been the most important among them and the chief spokesperson at present, to this point of view, in her works "Monastery and Guild Commerce under the Satavahanas" (1986).and also "Yavana Presence in

ancient India" (1988). In the latter work she sought to present that the Yavanas or Greeks, who first came as invaders and eventually carved out their kingdoms, also adopted Buddhism, greatly fostered agriculture and eventually the surplus production and foreign trade.

References:

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